



Lifting Infants and Toddlers through Language-rich
Environments (LITTLE) Grant

Operating Guidelines

2020-2021

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the requirements and regulations for operating a Lifting Infants and Toddlers through Language-rich Environments (LITTLE) grant. To ensure program compliance and quality service, all LITTLE grant providers must be familiar with and implement these guidelines. This document is intended to provide clarity and to offer guidance to LITTLE grant providers. Bright from the Start makes all funding decisions for the Lifting Infants and Toddlers through Language-rich Environments grants. Infant Toddler Specialists make site visits throughout the grant period to review compliance and provide support. Providers who do not comply with the LITTLE Guidelines may have the existing grant agreement terminated and will not be eligible for the grants in the future.

1.0 General Program Information

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Lifting Infants and Toddlers through Language-rich Environments (LITTLE) grants is to support the language and literacy skills of infants and toddlers by increasing teacher confidence and competence in using responsive caregiving practices as a tool to build literacy skills, developing a peer coach to support and coach infant and toddler teachers, and strengthening program leadership skills in supporting positive, responsive, and high quality infant and toddler classrooms.

1.2 Program Responsibilities

Early learning programs receiving a Lifting Infants and Toddlers through Language-rich Environments (LITTLE) Grant will:

- ensure that teachers, Peer Coaches, and directors participate in on-going professional development and coaching by a highly trained DECAL Infant Toddler Language and Literacy Specialist;
- identify a Peer Coach who will receive intensive training and support in peer coaching to support infant and toddler teachers in their program;
- hire qualified infant and toddler teachers and support attainment of higher credentials;
- participate in all evaluation measures, including but not limited to, the use of LENA and CLASS instruments;
- budget and expend grant funds according to LITTLE guidelines; and
- maintain or increase their current Quality Rated star rating.

1.3 Program Administration

All programs must designate one center director as the LITTLE Grant Administrator who will be responsible for all aspects of the project. The Grant Administrator will serve as the primary point of contact for the grant and should be located onsite at the child care program. The Grant Administrator may have other duties but should be able to focus ample time on the operation of the grant program during the work day. Persons with other responsibilities such as teaching in another classroom or preparing meals may not serve as the grant administrator.

1.4 Grant Roles and Responsibilities

Contact Signatory: The legal signatory (CEO, COO, CFO, President, Sole Proprietor) who has apparent authority or legal authority for the program/ company applying for the grant must sign the grant agreement. The contract signatory communicates the expectations of the LITTLE grant, including the guidelines, to the center director and staff to ensure successful grant participation.

LITTLE Grant Administrator: Identified director who attends all professional learning sessions, participates in technical assistance with the Infant Toddler Specialist, and oversees the day to day work of the grant.

Peer Coach: Staff identified and employed as a coach. The grant pays the Peer Coach's salary, and they receive intensive training and supports in coaching and mentoring, and act as a support and coach to infant toddler teaching staff. In addition, the Peer Coach will handle various administrative duties related to LENA and other data collection activities.

Teachers: Infant and Toddler teachers who are teachers in the grant classrooms identified to participate in the grant activities including professional development sessions, coaching sessions, observations, and assessments. Programs should determine the appropriate number of teachers to include in grant activities based on their budget.

2.0 Personnel

2.1 Teachers

Programs must identify specific infant and toddler teachers who will participate in the professional development and other grant activities. The teachers identified should work primarily in the infant and toddler classrooms receiving the grants. Grant classrooms must be staffed with teaching personnel to meet the minimum required ratios and credentials under Georgia's Child Care Learning Center licensing rules. Program administrators should review credentials and certifications of teaching staff and provide encouragement and resources for teachers to increase their credentials.

2.2 Peer Coaches

Programs must select one Peer Coach to serve as a support in grant classrooms. The Peer Coach may be chosen from the program's current infant and toddler classroom teachers or be recruited and must hold a current minimum credential as required under Georgia's Child Care Learning Center licensing rules. The Peer Coach may not be a member of the administrative staff; however, programs that currently have staff functioning in a technical assistance or coaching role may request a waiver to appoint that staff person as Peer Coach. Written approval must be obtained prior to making the appointment. The Peer Coach must be employed in that role for the period of time specified in the individual program's grant agreement (full or part-time) and cannot fulfill job duties in any other capacity including classroom teacher, substitute teacher, bus driver, or floater during the hours they are being paid as a coach. Peer Coaches must be paid at the rate specified in the grant.

The ideal Peer Coach will be a demonstrated leader with extensive experience as an infant and toddler teacher. Peer Coaches will provide mentoring, coaching and support to teachers and will provide administrative support for the LENA project and other data collection activities.

2.3 Grant Administrator

The grant administrator is a center director who is responsible for all aspects of the LITTLE grant administration. Grant administrators attend all professional development sessions, participate in coaching with the DECAL Infant Toddler Specialist and oversee the day to day grant activities. Grant administrators must support coaching and other activities of the grant by providing release time for the teacher, ensuring that the coach is able to complete required grant activities. The grant administrator must report any significant changes in the program to the DECAL Infant Toddler Manager immediately. Significant changes include resignation of the peer coach, temporary or permanent closure of grant classrooms, or temporary reassignment of the peer coach to non-grant related duties.

3.0 Professional Development

3.1 Required Professional Development Opportunities

All personnel participating in grant activities must attend required professional development opportunities as listed below.

- Literacy Leadership Forums (McCormick Center Leadership Academy)
 - Participants: Directors
 - Frequency: Monthly
 - Location: Virtual or face to face
 - Conducted by: DECAL staff
- Literacy Leadership Forums
 - Participants: Peer Coaches
 - Frequency: 6 sessions across 9 months
 - Location: Virtual or face to face
 - Conducted by: DECAL staff
- Professional Learning Community sessions
 - Participants: Infant and Toddler Teachers
 - Frequency: periodically with a minimum of 5 PLCs
 - Location: Virtual or face to face
 - Co-facilitated by Infant Toddler Specialist and Peer Coach
- Quarterly Early Language and Literacy Institutes
 - Participants: Teachers, Peer Coaches and Directors
 - Frequency: Quarterly
 - Location: Virtual or face to face
 - Conducted by DECAL staff and invited presenters
- Weekly coaching sessions
 - Participants: Teachers, Peer Coaches
 - Frequency: Weekly
 - Location: Onsite in classroom
 - Conducted by Peer Coaches with support from DECAL Infant Toddler Specialists

3.2 Professional Development System

Teachers, Peer Coaches and Directors must be enrolled in the Georgia Professional Development System (PDS). PDS combines education, experience and training and assigns all registrants a Career Level. Supporting documentation must be submitted to confirm educational attainment and training. Supporting documents include official transcripts, training certificates, copies of CDAs and technical college credentials. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) reviews transcripts and credentials for the PDS to verify an individual teacher's credentials and degrees. Grant Administrators should confirm that teachers have registered in the PDS, submitted required documentation to the PDS, and that the PDS has verified the credential. Failure to have credentials current and verified in the PDS may affect grant payments.

3.3 Registration for Professional Development Opportunities

Registration for Early Language and Literacy Institutes, Literacy Leadership Forums and Professional Learning Community sessions will be done through the PDS. The Grant Administrator is responsible for distributing professional development and training information to all grant personnel and registering the staff through DECAL. For help with professional development needs, LITTLE grant administrators should contact their assigned Infant Toddler Specialist or infanttoddler@dec.al.ga.gov.

3.4 Stipends for Attending Professional Development Sessions

Stipends must be paid for all staff participating in professional development that falls outside their regular work schedule. Stipends should be paid as follows:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Eligible for Stipends</u>	<u>Stipend</u>
Early Language and Literacy Institutes	Teachers, Peer Coaches, Directors	\$125 per Institute
Professional Learning Community Sessions	Teachers, Peer Coaches	\$25 per session (when held outside regular work hours)

4.0 Materials and Supplies

Infant Toddler Specialists will assist programs in conducting a Language and Literacy inventory in each grant classroom. Programs should plan to spend a **minimum** of \$2000 **per classroom** for language and literacy materials and supplies.

5.0 Funding

Funds must be utilized for approved grant activities. No funds may be budgeted for program administration or capital improvements. Failure to follow guidelines or to obtain written approval for expenditures outside the guidelines will result in repayment of LITTLE funds to DECAL, termination of grant agreement and ineligibility for participation in future grant opportunities.

Each grantee is required to develop a written budget for LITTLE funds. Programs may use the budget worksheet provided by Bright from the Start or may use any other standard budgeting worksheet. Programs are encouraged to review this document with their Infant Toddler Specialist to ensure their spending is on track.

5.1 Peer Coach Salary

Funding must be utilized to employ a Peer Coach. Peer Coaches must be employed part-time as specified in the individual program's grant agreement. A minimum salary of \$15 per hour for a 20-hour work week must be met. Programs must spend a minimum of \$11,700 (20 hours per week X \$15 X 39 weeks) on the Peer Coach's salary. If programs cannot meet the minimum salary requirement due to vacancies or absences, requests can be made to DECAL for approval to spend the funds for other grant purposes. The Peer Coach will also be eligible for stipends for participating in professional learning outside of their work schedule and compensation for any travel expenses incurred due to training or job responsibilities. Peer Coach may not fulfill any other job duties or roles during the hours they are being paid as a coach.

5.2 Classroom Materials, Equipment and Supplies

A minimum of \$2,000 must be spent in each classroom for language and literacy materials, equipment, and supplies. Infant Toddler Specialists will work with programs to inventory current materials, equipment and supplies and identify appropriate items for purchase. Programs may order from any vendor. Copies of paid invoices and receipts must be retained for record keeping.

5.3 Professional Learning Stipends and Support

Funds must be utilized for stipends to support participation at trainings, professional learning community meetings and other activities falling outside the employee's work schedule. Stipends may be paid for all grant staff participating in grant-related professional development occurring after regular work hours. Stipends will be paid as follows: \$125 per director, peer coach and teacher participating in the Quarterly Early Language and Literacy Institutes; and \$25 per teacher/peer coach participating in the monthly Professional Learning Community sessions if these are held outside regular work hours. Documentation of stipends paid must be retained for record keeping.

5.4 Professional Development or Credential Attainment

Grant funds may be utilized to support the professional development of staff working with the grant (directors, Peer Coaches, and teachers in grant-funded classrooms). Allowable expenses include approved trainings; fees associated with credential attainment including tuition, certification fees or books not covered by DECAL Scholars or HOPE; and other approved costs associated with professional learning. Requests must be submitted in writing (see Appendices A & B) and approved prior to funds being spent.

In order to utilize grant funds to support credential attainment, the following guidelines must be followed. Credentials include the CDA, Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC), Technical College Diploma (TCD), Associate of Applied Science Degree, Bachelor's Degree, or Master's Degree. The individual requesting funds must:

- be a director, peer coach, or teacher in one of the LITTLE funded classrooms;
- be working toward a specific infant toddler credential;
- participate in educational counseling with the DECAL Scholars Program;
- exhaust all available DECAL Scholars funds prior to requesting LITTLE funds; and
- submit a Professional Learning Plan along with the request for funds.

The cost of CDA training may be covered utilizing grant funds, however, DECAL Scholars offers support to cover the cost of CDA fees. The maximum amounts funded are listed as follows:

- CDA training up to \$500
- Books up to \$500 per semester
- Tuition up to \$2000 per semester
- Substitutes to allow for participation during the teacher's workday up to \$1500 per semester

Approval to use funds for credential attainment will be contingent on verification of the listed requirements with DECAL Scholars. Requests may be submitted to infanttoddler@dec.al.ga.gov with the

subject line “LITTLE PD Request”. Requests for funds to support credential attainment must be received no later than April 1st

5.5 Travel Costs

Grant funds must be utilized to cover the costs of travel including mileage, meals, and overnight stays incurred due to professional development activities. Programs must follow the state of Georgia travel regulations when determining mileage and per diem reimbursement rates. Reimbursement for transportation expenses incurred when using personally owned vehicles is at the rate per mile of actual miles traveled in the performance of official duties. The state mileage rate may increase or decrease during the grant period. Documentation of travel costs paid must be retained for record keeping. The state of Georgia travel regulations can be found at <https://sao.georgia.gov/state-travel-policy>. It is the responsibility of the grantee to have knowledge of and apply all state travel regulations.

5.6 Substitutes

Grant funds may be utilized to pay for additional staff such as a substitute teacher or “floater” teacher to support a lead or assistant teacher’s participation in professional learning including workshops, coaching sessions, or other identified professional learning activities. Grant funds can only be utilized when teachers are participating in professional learning activities approved for the grant. Documentation of substitute salary paid must be retained for record keeping.

5.7 Materials to Support Coaching

Grant funds may be utilized to pay for supplies used by the Peer Coach to support coaching activities. Examples of approved materials include paper, laminating film, printer ink and other consumable materials. Programs may spend no more than 1% of the total grant funds in this category.

5.8 Other pre-approved items

Funds may be utilized for other items such as a laptop or desktop computer for the peer coach’s use, a Wi-Fi hotspot or other items not specified in the guidelines. Programs must complete the request form found in Appendix A of this document and submit it to their Infant Toddler Specialist for approval.

6.0 Fiscal Procedures

6.1 Payment Process

All payments will be made quarterly through PANDA. Funds will be deposited in the provider’s bank account via an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) process. Appropriate forms and instructions to allow for EFT were included in the LITTLE grant application package. Providers are responsible for the correct routing of their payments by promptly notifying DECAL of changes in bank account information or ownership. Providers are responsible for reviewing their quarterly payments and payment documentation.

6.2 Schedule of Payments

Three equal payments, based on the number of classes funded, will be processed according to the schedule below. See Appendix C for the funding chart. Please note that no payment can be made until the grant agreement is fully executed.

Payments will be made no later than:

- October 31st
- January 31st
- April 30th

6.3 Record Keeping

LITTLE grant recipients are required to keep all receipts and other records necessary to support figures reported on the annual reconciliation statement. If a LITTLE grant recipient provider is audited and receipts and other records are not available to support these amounts, funds must be returned to DECAL. Examples of such records include, but are not limited to:

- LITTLE signed grant agreement
- Canceled check copies (front and back)
- Bank statements
- Paid invoices
- Federal and state payroll records
- EFTPS or other evidence of taxes remitted to regulatory agencies
- Timesheets
- Original receipts for equipment, materials, and supplies for LITTLE grant classrooms
- Approved waiver forms

7.0 Audit and Accounting Requirements

7.1 Reconciliation Report

LITTLE grantees must provide Bright from the Start with a reconciliation report spanning the dates of the grant agreement. The purpose of the reconciliation report is to provide an actual accounting of all the provider's expenditures related to the LITTLE grants. This report shall demonstrate that funds were spent in appropriate categories for their intended uses. Supporting documentation must be maintained and provided upon request from DECAL.

The LITTLE Grant Reconciliation Report is due by July 31, 2021. Failure to submit the LITTLE Grant Reconciliation Report by the due date may jeopardize other DECAL funding, as well as impact a program's eligibility to apply for future grant opportunities.

7.2 Right to Audit/ Agreed Upon Procedures Review

Bright from the Start reserves the right to require an independent, certified financial audit of the program at the provider's expense. Bright from the Start reserves the right to conduct Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP) reviews.

Bright from the Start may conduct audits and AUP reviews as specified in the LITTLE Grant Agreement, Section III, Part H:

Grantee agrees to cooperate fully with Grantor auditors and/or agents providing Audit or Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP) review services. Grantee will coordinate with auditors/reviewers to have appropriate staff available during the scheduled audit/review period. Grantee will make advanced preparations for scheduled audits/reviews to make available for auditors or reviewers all identified documents, records, and entity related materials requested by the auditors/reviewers for the current grant year, as well as for prior grant years in which Grantee participated in the LITTLE grants as requested by the Grantor. Grantee's failure to substantially prepare for a scheduled audit engagement or provide requested documentation or information to an auditor/reviewer during the scheduled audit period may result in the withholding of grant payments. The failure of Grantor to review and/or inspect the services provided or to discover a breach of this Grant or any amendment thereto shall not subsequently operate as a waiver of any remedies available to the Grantor.

7.3 Record Keeping Findings and Adverse Findings

Findings noted during the course of the AUP review that do not result in a balance of funds due back to Bright from the Start are considered Record Keeping Findings. Examples include:

- Understatements of reported expenses compared to the LITTLE Grant Reconciliation Report.
- Overstatements of reported expenses compared to the LITTLE Reconciliation Report.
- Variances between the expenditures reported on the LITTLE Reconciliation Report and the allowable LITTLE expenditures supported during field work.

Findings noted during the course of the AUP review that result in a balance of funds due back to Bright from the Start are considered Adverse Findings. Examples include:

- Failing to meet Peer Coach salary requirements.
- Failing to support that payroll taxes were forwarded to the relevant taxing authorities.
- Failing to support that the use of all monies received from Bright from the Start were used in accordance with applicable regulations and guidelines.

7.4 Balances Due to Bright from the Start

If a LITTLE grant recipient is unable to support its expenditures with receipts and other records, as a result of having its financial records reviewed (AUP, audit, investigation), funds may be required to be returned to Bright from the Start. There are three options regarding these outstanding funds:

- Remit the balance in full by the deadline date
- Submit a payment plan proposal with a 10 percent good faith payment by the deadline date
- Submit all source documentation by the deadline, disputing the results of the AUP review findings.

7.5 Reconsideration- Audit, Agreed Upon Procedures Review (AUP), or Investigation

In order for an Audit, AUP review or investigation to be reconsidered, providers must submit a formal request. The request:

- Submitted along with the Repayment Agreement document, provided by Bright from the Start
- Submitted in writing
- Must be made within 15 days of the notice of balance due letter from Bright from the Start
- Must include a detailed audit trail including all source documents necessary for Bright from the Start to make a final decision in a timely manner.

7.6 Random Reviews

The LITTLE grant recipient is subject to random, unannounced expenditure reviews by Bright from the Start or Bright from the Start contract auditors during the program year. All records (programmatic and financial) must be retained for a minimum of three years as stated in the grant agreement.

7.7 Tracking of LITTLE Grant Funds

The provider must maintain financial records to track LITTLE grant expenditures in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). All records must be retained for a minimum of three years as stated in the grant agreement.

The provider is required to keep all receipts and other records necessary to support figures reported on the LITTLE Grant reconciliation statement. If a program is audited and receipts and other records are not available to support these amounts, funds must be returned to Bright from the Start. Examples of such records include federal and state payroll records to verify payment of Peer Coach salaries, original receipts for equipment, supplies, and materials for grant classrooms, original receipts for expenses for travel to professional development activities and records indicating payment of stipends to eligible participants.

7.7 Lost, Stolen, or Destroyed Records

In the event of natural or man-made disasters, i.e. flooding, fire, hurricane, tornado, theft, etc., the LITTLE provider is responsible for providing third-party verification to substantiate the disaster. Verification includes police reports, insurance company claims, photos, or other proof that support the disaster and must also include detail of the property impacted. Claims related to man-made disasters must be made and filed within 30 calendar days of the incident. Claims related to natural disasters must be filed as soon as possible in accordance with insurance company regulations.

Lost, stolen or destroyed records will not exclude an organization selected for an audit, AUP review, or investigation from undergoing the scheduled review. DECAL reserves the right to request other supplementary documentation in lieu of supporting records that have been lost, stolen or destroyed.

7.7 Fraudulent/ Inappropriate Use of Funds

The provider shall ensure that expenses charged to the LITTLE grant funding source are not concurrently charged to another program funding source.

The provider must ensure that no LITTLE grant funds are used to pay penalties associated with adverse actions imposed by licensing or governmental agencies. LITTLE grant expenditures should be identifiable as separate from federal expenditures (e.g, CACFP).

Misuse of funds may result in repayment of funds and denial of current and future participation in other Bright from the Start programs and/or in prosecution.

Providers that participate in any federal programs operated by DECAL and who are terminated from a federal program because of fraudulent or misrepresentative submission of records and/or inappropriate use of funds as determined by the federal program, shall also have their LITTLE grant terminated.

8.0 Data Collection and Evaluation Activities

All grantees must participate in activities designed to evaluate program effectiveness. Participation in these activities includes completion of surveys and interviews, participation in classroom observations, use of the LENA device, structured assessments, and teacher practice observations.

LITTLE Prior Approval for Purchase

Program Name: _____ Date: _____

Requested By: _____ Email _____ Phone _____

Item Description: (including vendor, item name, and cost)

Note: If submitting for professional development, include conference/training title, dates, location, and website information or the agenda.

Justification/Explanation (How does it improve participation in the LITTLE grant or impact language and literacy in your center?):

_____ Approved _____ Denied

Person Reviewing Form: _____ Date: _____

Reconciliation Line to Record Expense: _____

LITTLE Grant: Credential Request Form

Purpose: This form is required if a LITTLE director, peer coach, or classroom teacher is requesting funding to assist with acquiring an infant toddler credential. Please refer to section 5.4 Professional Development or Credential Attainment of the LITTLE Operating Guidelines for additional information. Requests must be received no later than April 1. **Attach proof of registration with the request.**

Applicant's Name:	PDS #:
Site Name:	Position: <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Director Classroom, if applicable:
Check off to indicate funding that you are requesting: <input type="checkbox"/> CDA Training up to \$500 (Test fees are covered by DECAL Scholars) Amount requested \$ <input type="checkbox"/> Books up to \$500 per semester Amount requested \$ <input type="checkbox"/> Tuition up to \$2000 per semester Amount requested \$ <input type="checkbox"/> Substitutes up to \$1500 per semester Amount requested \$	
Name and Address of School:	Credential seeking: <input type="checkbox"/> CDA <input type="checkbox"/> Infant/Toddler Care Specialist TCC <input type="checkbox"/> TCD-Technical College Diploma <input type="checkbox"/> Associate of Applied Science Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree
Term for which you are considering enrollment:	

I, _____ (Applicant's Name), attest that all of the information appearing on this request from is true to the best of my knowledge. I attest that I have participated in educational counseling with DECAL Scholars prior to submission of this request. I authorize any agent or employee of Bright from the start: Georgia department of Early Care and Learning to verify this information and release it to any necessary party for my consideration of funds.

Applicant's signature

Date

Director's signature

Date

For Official Use:

DECAL Scholars Status: ☒ Requested amounts are reasonable Notes: _____

DECAL Scholars Representative Signature: _____

Approval to use funds: ☒ Approved ☒ Denied

Approved by: _____ Date: _____

2020-2021 LITTLE Grants Payment Detail

CLASSES	Two Classes	Three Classes	Four Classes
Payment 1	\$7,760	\$8,893	\$10,026.67
Payment 2	\$7,760	\$8,893	\$10,026.67
Payment 3	\$7,760	\$8,894	\$10,027.66
TOTAL	\$23,280	\$26,680	\$30,080